

VZCZCXRO8056
PP RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHNJ #0118/01 0921730
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 021730Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6841
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 0590
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0207
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0035
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000118

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/C AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR GAVIN AND HUDSON
LONDON FOR POL -- LORD
PARIS FOR POL -- D'ELIA AND KANEDA
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR AU

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [AU](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: BEFORE PARLIAMENT, PRIME MINISTER REVIEWS HIS
GOVERNMENT'S PROGRESS

REF: NDJAMENA 0104

NDJAMENA 00000118 001.2 OF 002

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) Prime Minister Yousseuf Saleh Abbas appeared before Chad's 155-member National Assembly, along with his 41-member Cabinet, March 31, to respond to questions on the successes and challenges of his 11-month old government. The PM, who had received questions posed by parliamentarians in advance, read prepared responses to each. He gave his views on the rising cost of living, the government's unpopular decision to ban use of charcoal for cooking, police offenses, and the high crime rate. He expressed continued support for the Sirte Accord with the Chadian rebels, the August 13 Accord with the Chadian opposition, and the electoral reform committee, as elements of the government's program for peace and security. END SUMMARY.

ENVIRONMENT AND COST OF LIVING

¶3. (U) The PM explained the government's December 2008 decision to ban use of charcoal for cooking and prohibit tree-cutting (to produce charcoal) as necessary initiatives to protect the environment and fight desertification. He referenced Chad's long-standing participation in the Interstate Commission to Fight Drought in the Sahel (CILSS), and added that Chadian citizens needed a better understanding of environmental issues and civic responsibility. He also announced government subsidization of butane gas, as well as reduction in the price for automotive gas.

¶4. (U) On the rising cost of living, the Prime Minister pointed out that Chad was challenged by the global economic downturn and by the need to import nearly all commodities through the Cameroonian port of Douala. The government had spoken with Cameroonian authorities to agree on import tax exemptions for some goods, he noted. The PM charged that the hoarding of rice and grain was driving up market prices and reported that an inter-ministerial committee had been set up to evaluate the feasibility of price controls. He noted that the GOC was nearly finished restructuring the Agriculture and Commercial Bank to provide easier credit.

¶6. (U) The PM explained the re-imposition of a tax on construction materials, whose 2007 elimination had resulted in the loss to the government of USD eight million. He said that the government was working with the Chinese government on construction of a cement plant in the south that would come on line in 2010.

ILLEGAL WEAPONS AND LAND DISPUTES

¶7. (U) Questioned about ongoing disputes between herders and farmers in the south, the PM stated that limited natural resources were at the heart of increasing tensions. He then elaborated on the GOC's efforts to confiscate illegal weapons, describing a committee formed under the Ministry of Interior to check houses and cars. In response to the assertion that lawful owners of permitted weapons had had their firearms confiscated, the PM replied that the new committee could be investigated for abuse of authority.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION
ELECTIONS AND PRESS FREEDOM

¶8. (U) The PM reaffirmed his government's commitment to national reconciliation, regional stability and elections through implementation of the Sirte Accord (with Chad rebels) and the August 13 Accord (between Chad political parties). He expressed support for the work of the Electoral Reform Committee, and revealed that the GOC was in the process of re-evaluating the notorious "Ordonnance Five," an emergency decree limiting press freedom in the wake of the events of

NDJAMENA 00000118 002.2 OF 002

February 2008, with the intention of modifying or canceling it.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) The session was mostly business-like and non-confrontational, before a Parliament dominated by the pro-Deby MPS alliance of political parties. The Parliament has been calling individual ministers for testimony before various committees. This was a modest but welcome exercise of the workings of Chad's constitutional system. END COMMENT.

¶10. (U) Minimize considered.
NIGRO